



Association of Minnesota Counties

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Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah Receives Association of Minnesota Counties' President's Award

(St. Paul, MN)— **Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah** received an Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) President's Award for his years of dedicated service and exemplary leadership in county government. 2017 AMC President Gary Hendrickx, a Swift County Commissioner, selected Sivarajah to receive the award December 4 in St. Cloud.

The prestigious President's Award is presented to an individual who has a deep history of public service to their community and to their county. Sivarajah was first elected to the Anoka County board in 2003 and has served as board chair for the past seven years. Before holding elected office, she worked as a staff member in the county's Human Services Division for 12 years, and there discovered a passion for helping people and advocating for families going through difficult times.

When the Minnesota Legislature is in session, Commissioner Sivarajah spends countless hours in St. Paul, promoting county issues and working energetically for improvements in the areas of human services, economic development, and transportation — including long-needed safety improvements along the Highway 10/169 corridor.

Supporting the business community and growing jobs has been a priority for this life-long Minnesotan. In addition to keeping property taxes among the lowest in the state, under her leadership Anoka County supports new and expanding businesses through participation in Greater MSP, the Open to Business program, and the Economic Gardening program. She's a strong advocate for job training programs, such as the award-winning FastTRAC Health Care Pathway program, to not only find jobs for unemployed or underemployed individuals but also to address the serious labor shortage local and regional businesses are facing.

Described as a tireless champion for the taxpayer, Sivarajah led efforts to lower her county's property tax levy for the first time in more than 40 years. She worked to streamline and right-size county government, using ideas and models adapted from the private sector. In addition, more than \$50 million in county debt has been paid down and a "pay as you go" philosophy has been adopted under her direction. Anoka County residents now have a better understanding of county finances thanks to this commissioner's efforts to make budget processes and procedures more transparent.

In response to a wave of heroin/opioid overdose cases in Anoka County, Commissioner Sivarajah made it her mission to raise awareness about the danger of heroin/opioid use. Under her leadership and resolve, much-needed attention is now being given to this deeply troubling national epidemic.

AMC is a voluntary statewide organization that assists the state's 87 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Minnesota. The association works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted. In addition, the Association provides educational programs, training, research and communications for county officials.

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Editors: Photos attached.

Photo #1: Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah and Commissioner Gray Hendrickx, Swift County.

Photo #2: Anoka County Commissioners Rhonda Sivarajah, Robyn West and Julie Brastad.